

Fire safety includes working smoke detector and easy-to-read address

By Dave Lapof, Siletz Fire Chief

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and re-introduce the Siletz Fire District to you, the members of our community.

I was recently hired by the fire district to serve as fire chief. While I do respond as a firefighter/EMT, my main focus is administrative.

My experience in emergency services spans more than 23 years, including volunteering with a very small island fire district in Washington state. Most recently, I was with the Seal Rock Fire District as fire chief and with the Keizer Fire District since 1995, leaving that agency in the capacity of lieutenant.

We are accomplishing great things here at the Siletz Fire District. Five of our 12 volunteers are attending a first responder class at the Toledo Fire Department, a number of our folks attended specialized pumper operator training last month and the list of training classes goes on and on.

The purpose of all this training is to better prepare ourselves to respond to your emergency, whether it is a fire or medical in nature.

But the most efficient way to address these emergencies is not to have them in the first place. While many medical issues sneak up on us, fires for the most part are preventable.

During the cold weather, we noticed an increase in responses to carbon monoxide alarms going off, which brought us into your homes. These alarm activations happen in part because homes are closed up to keep the cold weather out and wood stoves work overtime. During these visits, we saw safety practices that concern us, including:

- Firewood stored too close to the heater
- Flues and stove pipe that leak or are not sealed up
- Homes without working smoke detectors

Please look around and see if any of these items describe safety issues in your home.

We can't stress enough the lifesaving benefit of having a working smoke detector. It's recommended that you have one in a common hallway and one in each bedroom.

We know this can be a financial burden and they can be difficult to install. But even with these challenges, the results of having a working smoke detector to warn you and your family of a growing danger is really the difference between life and death in thousands of homes across our nation.

Oregon was one of the first states to recognize the benefit of a smoke detector with a 10-year battery and a hush feature. With both of these added features, batter-

ies are less likely to be removed and will last for years.

When we do have to respond, finding your home quickly can mean the difference between a happy outcome or one that results in death. Having a front porch light and a clearly identifiable address are the best ways to assure we will arrive in the quickest manner and begin to resolve your crisis, whatever it may be.

We are actively applying for grants to address a number of these concerns, but

until then please make your home as fire safe as you can.

Because of my work schedule my hours are varied, but you can always reach me by one of the following ways: 541-444-2043 (station), 541-272-1958 (cell) or dlapof@siletzfire.com. I would be more than happy to discuss these or any other safety issues or concerns you might have.

I look forward to meeting more of the community over the next few months. Stay safe.



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Notes, con't from previous page

Parent: You're feeling angry and disappointed, and you've given up.

Reflective listening involves grasping what the child feels and means, then stating this meaning so the child feels understood and accepted. Reflective listening provides a sort of mirror for the child to see himself or herself more clearly. In other words, it gives the child a kind of feedback.

Most people feel a little uncomfortable trying reflective listening as a tool, but it quickly becomes fairly easy.

Communication between persons can be described in terms of "closed" and "open" responses. A closed response indicates the listener has neither heard nor understood what was said. Closed responses tend to cut off or end communication.

In contrast, an open response indicates the listener has heard what the other person has said. It reflects the speaker's message in a way that clearly indicates the listener has heard the feelings behind the words.

Here are examples of closed and open responses following a child's remark:

Child: I'm really disappointed with Billy and the other kids for not coming over to play with me. There's nothing to do.

Closed response: Well, things don't always go the way we want them to. That's part of life.

Open response: It seems as if no one cares and you are feeling left out.

The first response does not accept the child's feelings. It says that what he

or she feels does not matter. This is a type of put-down that ends up blocking communication and may leave the child feeling rejected.

The second response recognizes what the child is feeling. It shows acceptance and concern. The child may decide to tell you more.

Reflective listening means we produce open responses that reflect the child's feelings and meanings. It requires sensitivity to a wide variety of feelings plus the ability to express them. It is non-judgmental. Thus, it encourages the child to feel heard and to keep talking.

Nonverbal communication

The communication process is always a combination of verbal and nonverbal. Our actions (eye contact and open body language), facial expressions and voice tones communicate whether or not we are listening to the speaker. Ever try to hold a conversation with someone who is reading the newspaper at the same time?

We can communicate nonverbally through a smile, a frown or a pat on the back, all of which enhance or encourage communication. Silently deciding not to overprotect, nag or interfere communicates acceptance.

When we respond nonjudgmentally by accepting our child's feelings and meanings, both verbally and nonverbally, we strengthen empathy and communication.

A parent cannot catch the meaning of a sullen look, a broad smile or a tearful face simply by listening. Behavior expresses

meaning, sometimes more clearly than words. A parent must learn to catch the meanings of a child's behavior by "tuning in" to more than his or her words.

Examples of responding to nonverbal behaviors could be:

"Your frown seems to say that you disagree."

"When your face lights up that way, you look very happy."

"Looks as if you are really upset. Want to talk about it?"

Remember! Statements that acknowledge nonverbal cues invite the child to express his or her feelings.

Since reflective listening will be as new to the child as it is to you, expect a startled reaction to your first attempts. The child may look surprised and acknowledge your statement with an eye roll or a "yeah" and then walk away.

At this point, you could attempt to keep communication open with, "Would you like to tell me more about it?" Or, depending upon the situation, you could make no response and wait for another opportunity.

It's important that you don't try to force the child to share his or her feelings. This new experience may be embarrassing to the child and your well-intentioned responses may be seen as an attempt to invade the child's privacy. A power contest could result if you attempt to push the matter.

There will be many opportunities to try again if you make attempts to respond to the child's invitations. The child is

free to accept or reject your offer of help. Don't be discouraged if the child does not respond quickly; remember this is a new experience that may be uncomfortable for the child.

Don't be concerned about doing reflective listening "just right." You don't have to do it perfectly. If you are sincere in an attempt to understand but mis-identify the feeling, your child will let you know and you can try again.

Some words of caution

Keep your feedback statements tentative. You can't be sure you know exactly what the child is feeling. Watch your tone of voice and avoid sounding like a mind reader.

Reflective listening can be overdone. Constantly bombarding your child with reflective listening can cause them to avoid communication with you. Don't respond to every frown or comment. Use discretion. With sensitivity, you can recognize when your child wants to talk and when he or she does not.

Once you have gained skill in using reflective listening, you will be ready for the next step - exploring alternatives, which will be the subject of next month's article. Usually, children can solve their own problems simply through being heard by a sympathetic adult. They can, however, gain wider experience in problem solving when an adult helps them consider the advantages and disadvantages of various courses of action.

Remember - practice plus patience equals progress. Have fun with the journey.